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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

Center Point-Moss Lake 230/115-kV Transmission Line and Moss Lake Substation, Gordon and Whitfield Counties, Georgia

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) proposes to construct and operate a 230-kV Moss Lake Substation and a 15.5-mile, 230/115-kV double-circuit transmission line connecting the new substation with TVA's existing Center Point Substation. TVA would also build a short transmission line connection between the proposed 230/115-kV transmission line and North Georgia Electric Membership Corporation's (NGEMC) nearby Tilton Substation and upgrade the Center Point Substation to accommodate the new transmission line. The proposed action is in Gordon and Whitfield Counties, Georgia.

The proposed action is intended to address overloading and reliability problems affecting NGEMC's facilities in south Whitfield and Gordon Counties. A large portion of the increasing electrical load in this area is presently served by a single line from the Georgia Integrated Transmission System, and some of the connected NGEMC substations are operating at their capacity. The proposed transmission line and substation would provide a more reliable, higher-capacity connection to the TVA power grid and relieve overloading of parts of the NGEMC system.

TVA has reviewed the proposed action and reasonable alternatives in an Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with its procedures implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This EA is incorporated by reference.

Two primary alternatives (i.e., the No-Action Alternative and an Action Alternative) were developed. Under the No Action Alternative, TVA would not construct and operate the new substation and transmission line or the other associated upgrades, and the overloading and reliability problems affecting NGEMC in the project area would continue.

Under the Action Alternative, TVA would construct and operate the Moss Lake Substation on a 25-acre site already owned by TVA and adjacent to a NGEMC substation. TVA would also construct and operate the 15.5-mile, double-circuit Center Point-Moss Lake 230/115-kV Transmission Line. The south-most 3.3 miles of the line would be built on vacant right-of-way (ROW) already owned by TVA. The remaining 12.2 miles would be built on new ROW to be acquired by TVA. This ROW would be 150-feet wide and occupy about 306 acres. The line would be built with H-frame metal structures. The preferred route of the transmission line analyzed as part of the Action Alternative was selected from among several potential routes in order to minimize impacts to natural and cultural resources, impacts to property owners, and other factors.

Based on the analysis in the EA, TVA concludes that the Action Alternative would have minor and insignificant impacts on groundwater, surface water, vegetation, wildlife, recreation, and visual and aesthetic resources. The proposed transmission line would cross the Conasauga and Coosawattee Rivers in areas occupied by several species of fish and mussels listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Portions of these rivers in the project area are also designated critical habitat for several of these listed species. The federally listed large-flowered skullcap also occurs in the project area. The proposed transmission line

was rerouted to reduce the potential impacts to the listed fish, mussels, and critical habitat, and to avoid impacts to the skullcap. TVA would also implement the mitigation measures listed below under "Protection of Aquatic Resources" to further reduce potential impacts to listed species and critical habitat. With the implementation of these measures, TVA has determined that the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect federally listed species or critical habitat. In a letter dated June 15, 2007, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this determination. No state-listed species would be adversely affected.

The proposed transmission line would affect about 2.6 acres of forested wetlands. TVA would mitigate wetlands impacts by purchasing 23.33 credits at the Oostanaula River Wetlands Bank in Floyd County, Georgia, or other qualifying bank. With this mitigation, wetlands impacts would be insignificant. The proposed action would result in the construction of transmission line support structures in the 100-year floodplains of several streams. This is considered a repetitive action under Executive Order (EO) 11988 and is not expected to increase the flood hazard. The proposed substation would not be built in a floodplain. The proposed transmission line would cross and run parallel to sections of the Conasauga River listed in the Nationwide Rivers Inventory. The values that make the Conasauga River eligible for the Inventory would not be significantly affected and the National Park Service was consulted on this determination.

The proposed transmission line was designed to minimize impacts to historic properties and TVA has determined that historic properties eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as a nearby National Historic Landmark, would not be adversely affected. The Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with this determination in letters dated June 20, 2007.

Mitigation

The following routine measures will be applied during construction and operation of the proposed transmission line and switching station:

General Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Clearing, Construction, and Maintenance

TVA practices detailed in Appendices II, III, IV, V, and VI of the EA will be used during clearing, construction, and maintenance. EO 13112 directs all federal agencies to prevent and control the introduction and spread of invasive species resulting from their activities. TVA will use reseeding mixes that are certified free of invasive, exotic plant seeds when replanting disturbed areas.

The following additional mitigation measures will be undertaken to reduce potential adverse environmental effects:

Groundwater Protection

- During transmission line revegetation and maintenance activities, application of fertilizers and herbicides will not be applied in areas that flow to groundwater infiltration zones (i.e., springs, wells, and sinkholes). Additionally, herbicides with groundwater contamination warnings would not be used in the areas surrounding the cave entrances located within the proposed transmission line right-of-way.

- Herbicides will not be applied within the area of the substation site that drains to the south to avoid impacts to a groundwater recharge area.

Protection of Aquatic Resources

- Category B protections will apply in the Conasauga drainage to perennial streams crossed by the proposed transmission line. As defined in Muncy (1999), a minimum 200-foot streamside management zone (SMZ) will be established with a 100-foot riparian buffer on each side of the stream (EA Appendix VII). Construction of temporary stream crossings in these areas is prohibited. The buffer, when possible, will be retained in or planted to native vegetation of at least shrub size.

  Category A protection will apply in the Conasauga drainage to intermittent streams. A 50-foot SMZ will be implemented on both sides of these crossings. Some vegetation within these buffer zones may be temporarily disturbed if culverts, fords, or other temporary stream crossings are necessary, but stream banks will be restored to normal contours and stabilized after the temporary crossing is removed. The buffer, when possible, will be retained in or planted to native vegetation of at least shrub size.

- Fallen or cut trees will be left in place, when possible, in the buffer zone. Trees that must be cleared will be removed with a minimum of ground disturbance (e.g., winched out using heavy equipment operating outside the buffer), and root systems will be retained in the ground.

  The transmission line right-of-way will be maintained on a minimum three-year schedule.

- All staging areas and equipment maintenance areas will be located at least 200 feet from stream habitats.

  Watercourses that convey surface water only during storm events (i.e., wet-weather conveyances or ephemeral streams) and that could be affected by the proposed transmission line route will be protected by standard BMPs as identified in Muncy (1999). These BMPs are designed in part to minimize erosion and subsequent sedimentation in streams.

Cave Ecosystem Protection

- A 200-foot buffer around each cave entrance will be established, and the current vegetation will be maintained to the tallest height appropriate for the proposed transmission line. Vegetation will be hand-cleared only, and vehicles and equipment will be restricted unless confined to an existing access road.

Wetlands

- To compensate for the adverse impacts to wetlands, 23.33 mitigation credits will be purchased at the Oostanaula River Wetlands Bank in Floyd County, Georgia, or other qualifying bank.

Hazardous Waste

- Two houses located within the proposed transmission line right-of-way will need to be removed. Before removal, these houses will undergo a full evaluation to determine if they contain or are constructed with any material that is hazardous or otherwise regulated under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, or other state or federal laws or regulations. If any such material is present, it will be handled and disposed of pursuant to the applicable regulations.

Conclusion and Findings

Based on the findings listed above and the analyses in the associated EA, we conclude that the construction and operation of the proposed new transmission line and the upgrades to the existing transmission line and substations would not be a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the environment. Accordingly, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This Finding of No Significant Impact is contingent upon adherence to the identified mitigation measures.

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August 8, 2007
Date Signed